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'Penkovsky Papers' editor admits CIA

By Barton Reppert
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The editor of a controversial best seller on Cold War espionage, *The Penkovsky Papers*, now acknowledges that he obtained the basic materials for the book from the CIA.

At the same time, Frank Gibney contends that the papers ascribed to spy Oleg V. Penkovsky were fully authentic, and he denies that their disclosure was part of "some behind-the-scenes CIA publishing project or plot."

Gibney's statements came in the preface to a new paperback edition of the Penkovsky book, which had provoked angry denunciations from the Kremlin — as well as skepticism among Western Soviet-watchers — when it originally was published in 1955.

Penkovsky was a colonel in the GRU, the Soviet military espionage apparatus and who served as an agent for U.S. and British intelligence during a 16-month period in 1951 and 1952. He was arrested by the Soviet KGB security police in October 1952 and was executed the next year after a trial in Moscow.

At his trial, Penkovsky confessed to passing to the West more than 5,000 microfilmed pages of highly classified documents on Soviet weaponry, military strategy, political intentions and espionage operations.

The *Penkovsky Papers* contained relatively dry, expository material with a series of personal observations harshly critical of the Soviet system and Kremlin leadership.

For example, Penkovsky was quoted as declaring that Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev headed "a government of adventurers. They are demagogues and liars, covering themselves with the banner of the struggle for peace. ... I know that the leaders of our Soviet state are the willing provocateurs of an atomic war."

In 1976, a Senate Intelligence Committee report said *The Penkovsky Papers* was a CIA book published "for operational reasons." The committee said, "The book was prepared and written by witting agency assets who drew on actual case materials."

When the book originally came out, in 1955, an introduction by Gibney made no mention of the CIA's role and said only that the Penkovsky materials had been "smuggled out of the Soviet Union ... in highly anonymous circumstances."

But in his preface to the new Ballantine Books paperback edition, Gibney confirms that "when I first looked at the materials from which the papers were selected, they were in the possession of the Central Intelligence Agency."

He explained that "some of the material was in the form of transcriptions of interview sessions that Penkovsky had had with British and American intelligence officers. I also heard some recordings of Penkovsky's voice. A large portion, however, consisted of notes either typed or handwritten by Penkovsky — much of which he had sent out on microfilm."

"The fact that these papers were in the possession of the CIA in no way

invalidated their authenticity," said Gibney, a former *Life* magazine writer and *Newsweek* senior editor who is now vice chairman of the Encyclopedia Britannica board of editors.

"In no sense of the word were the papers handed to me as part of some behind-the-scenes CIA publishing project or plot," he wrote. "Quite to the contrary, it was I who got wind of their existence and managed to pry the papers out of the agency for use as a book."

Preparing the book, Gibney said, involved "a great deal of cutting and

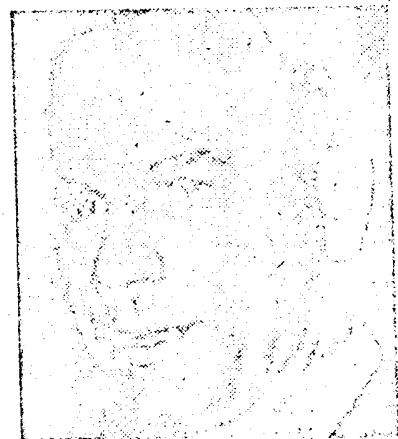
splicing." But he insisted that "the one thing we did not tamper with was Penkovsky's words. Everything in the papers themselves [as published] came from him. Nor did we violate his meaning or intent in our editing."

Western specialists on the Soviet Union remain divided over the value of *The Penkovsky Papers* as a historical document.

Robert Conquest, a leading British scholar on Soviet affairs, says there is "no evidence whatever that the papers were in any sense faked, or that the material attributed to Col. Penkovsky was in any way fabricated."

However, Stephen S. Rosenfeld, a foreign affairs columnist for the *Washington Post*, described the Penkovsky volume as "pure propaganda" and "worthless."

"From my general knowledge of defectors and spies ... I would say that the tapes were heavily censored," to leave out of the published version material that would reflect "self-doubt, remorse and pettiness on Penkovsky's part," Rosenfeld said.



Oleg V. Penkovsky
Executed by Soviets